

I work in Customer Service for U.S. Cellular® Corporation. About a year and a half ago, a customer shared an experience with me that has stayed in my mind ever since, and I have to share it. I spoke with a rural Wisconsin customer who expressed great concern over the lack of coverage in her area. She sounded quite agitated, and kept asking if additional towers would be put up near her farm. I told her that no new towers were being considered, and gave her additional options, such as trying brands of phones which work better in rural areas. She still was not calmed, and did not want to end the call. After talking to her for several minutes, she finally told me that the reason why she was so concerned was that frequently calls in her area failed to connect, and needed to be redialed multiple times. Sometimes they failed. Her husband had needed to call 911 after a grain silo had collapsed on him. The call was placed successfully, but he died before emergency crews could reach him. This had occurred two or three months before our conversation. This woman was now a widow, and was running the farm alone with her adult children. As a mother, and having experienced such a terrible loss, she was very afraid for the safety of her children, and wanted to do everything that she could to make sure they were safe. To her, that meant reliable cell phone service, not as a luxury, but as a safety device to keep her family connected to one another and the outside world in case of emergency. I felt, and still feel, that I could not help this woman in the way that she needed. I could only offer this woman empathy, but what she needed was coverage.

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